

FE Week

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Blackburn College celebrated Queen Elizabeth II's record breaking reign by renaming one of its iconic buildings after her Majesty, writes Rebecca Jones.

Special permission from Buckingham Palace was sought by the chair of the college's corporation board, Sir Bill Taylor, to change the New Victoria Centre to the 'Elizabeth Building' to mark the Queen surpassing her great-great-grandmother as the UK's longest-reigning monarch.

The college invited staff and students who have Elizabeth or Victoria in their name to join the festivities with the Mayor of Blackburn, Councillor Faryad Hussain.

Sir Bill said: "We wanted to do something to mark this historic occasion. The naming ceremony is a fitting tribute to the Queen's great achievement.

"We also felt it showed the great affection shown by Blackburn and its residents for our longest-serving monarch."

TOPSLICE OFFENDERS THREATENED WITH FUNDING SUSPENSION

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Providers that flout rules on revealing how much they topslice when subcontracting have been given a November 23 deadline to comply — or face having their funding suspended.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has threatened to suspend public money for lead providers that fail to publish their management fee details on their websites.

It comes around nine months after an *FE Week* investigation uncovered providers were ignoring rules that they must publish what they charge subcontractors. And while there was compliance with rules on listing the range of fees, these were as high as 40 per cent in some instances.

However, the SFA has now warned providers that "we will suspend your

payments" if information is not made public by the deadline.

An SFA spokesperson said: "All colleges and other training organisations that subcontract must publish the actual funding paid and retained for each of their subcontractors in the [provider] funding years 2013 to 2014 and 2014 to 2015."

The information should be made available on websites, and include current supply chain fees and charges policy. The SFA also wants the relevant weblinks provided on 2015 to 2016 subcontractor declaration forms.

The rule requiring colleges and independent learning providers (ILPs) to specify the management fees they charged each of their subcontractors over the previous academic year was introduced by the SFA in August last year.

But *FE Week* found four months later that

rules were being ignored by a number of providers — including the country's biggest SFA contractor at the time Learndirect.

A Learndirect spokesperson said it published figures showing how much the company had paid and retained from each of its 73 subcontractors in 2013/14, out of its total £136.9m SFA allocation, on its website before Christmas. But the Sheffield-based provider had not published the information for 2014/15 as *FE Week* went to press.

The company's 'supply chain fee policy' webpage showed on Thursday (September 10) that it was charging management fees up to 40 per cent of contract values — which was unchanged from when *FE Week* reported on the issue in early December.

A spokesperson for Learndirect, which was allocated £117.9m for 2015/16 by the SFA as of last month, said: "The business intends to

publish its 2014/15 charges in advance of the November 23 deadline."

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), said that "any withholding of funds should be done as a last resort".

"Some of the data is complex and the SFA needs to ensure that providers are very clear about how a breach has occurred," he added.

Julian Gravatt, assistant chief executive at the Association of Colleges, said: "Colleges find themselves on both sides of the contracting relationship, as main and subcontractors, in a range of areas including both apprenticeships and higher education. It is right for everyone to look at subcontracting to ensure the maximum amount is spent on education and training, but you can't really judge a price without knowing the service it's buying."

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TRIBAL

working as one



ePortfolio with
Learner Content
Management

Enhance learner engagement

Improve timely completion and success rates

Increase case-load efficiency

Reduce costs

EDITION 146

NEWS

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Post-16 funding implication will be examined for summer-born change

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The impact on post-16 funding of plans to allow summer-born children to enter reception after their fifth birthday will be examined before changes are made, the government has confirmed.

A Department for Education spokesperson told *FE Week* that issues around post-16 funding would form part of the consultation on proposals to change the admissions code to accommodate summer-born children starting school later than others in their age cohort.

Education Minister Nick Gibb (pictured) confirmed on Tuesday (September 8) that the government intended to change the code, which currently allows summer-born children to be held back from starting school after their fifth birthday if they skip reception and go straight into Year One.

Under the proposed changes, children born between April and August could be starting school as late as the age of five years and five months and leaving after their 19th birthday, and questions have subsequently been raised about post-16 funding.

Under current rules, Department for Education funding only covers young people up to the age of 18, after which they are funded at a level 17.5 per cent lower than for 16 and 17-year-olds. Meanwhile, post-19 education funding comes from the unprotected budget of the Department for Business,

Innovation and Skills, and is determined by different methodology.

An Association of Colleges spokesperson said allowing summer-born children to start school later wouldn't have a "direct effect on colleges" for 10 years, but added that it was a "rational response to evidence that shows achievement gaps depending on when children are born".

She added: "The same research shows that these month-of-birth achievement gaps diminish over the age of 16, perhaps because, up to now, the education system has been less obsessed about fitting everyone into age slots.

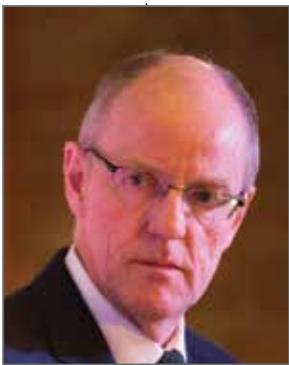
"The 17.5 per cent cut for 18-year-old funding and the further cuts once people reach 19 mean this is no longer the case and are eliminating second chances whichever month you are born."

Announcing the changes, Mr Gibb said they were part of his government's "plan to extend social justice and opportunity", adding: "We want all children to have an equal chance to excel in school regardless of when they are born".

He said: "Parents know their children best and we want to make sure summer-born children can start reception at the age of five, if their parents think it is in their best interests.

"We are going to make changes to admission rules but we want councils and academies to take immediate action."

Following the consultation, details of which are yet to be announced, the changes will need Parliamentary approval.



FE WEEK NEWS IN BRIEF

Ofqual consultation

Exams watchdog Ofqual has launched a public consultation on six GCSE and nine A-levels to be taught from September 2017.

It wants to hear views, by November 5, on the assessment arrangements and objectives for each subject, and whether they should be tiered.

Exam board specifications are expected to be available from next autumn.

Subjects include GCSE ancient history, media studies and electronics, and AS and A-levels in archaeology and law.

Visit www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ for a consultation link to take part.

Trailblazer increase

The number of Trailblazer apprenticeship standards ready for delivery has risen by almost 50 per cent in just over a week.

An online *FE Week* report on August 6 warned of growing frustration among Trailblazer designers over the government's slow progress with approving standards, when just 24 standards had been judged ready for delivery.

The figure still only stood at 35 by Wednesday (September 2), but it had increased by a further 46 per cent by Thursday the following week to 51.

Degree-awarding hope

Universities Minister Jo Johnson has revealed plans that would allow general FE colleges to apply for degree-awarding powers again.

A block on such applications has been in place for six months, but Mr Johnson said on Wednesday (September 9) that a new green paper aimed at providing higher education competition for universities was due in the autumn.

He said the block would be lifted "shortly".

Nearly 300 FE colleges offer higher education courses from universities, but only four can award their own foundation degrees.

Prison learning contracting under review

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The system of prison learning contracting will come under the spotlight in a review ordered by Justice Secretary Michael Gove.

The former Education Secretary wants the inquiry to, in part, look at how the Offender Learning and Skills Service (Olass) — currently contracted to three general FE colleges and one independent learning provider — operates.

It was announced on Tuesday (September 8) along with the wider review brief of considering how prisoners could be given improved "education opportunities and qualifications" to boost job prospects.

It will be led by Dame Sally Coates (pictured right), director of academies south for the United Learning Schools group, who carried out a review of teaching standards for the Department for Education in 2011.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice said Dame Ruth would be looking "into Olass as part of the [latest] review", including contract arrangements where funding is directed by the Skills Funding Agency, before reporting early next year.

The Olass system

was first rolled out across the country in 2006 and the fourth round of Olass contracts were agreed in August 2012. They are currently set to end in July next year.

Dr Paul Phillips OBE (pictured left), principal of Weston College which holds the Olass contract for the South West of England, said: "As a college, we have invested substantial resources to meet the maths and English agenda, and in many ways we would seek even further improvements in regard to technical qualifications."

He added: "On a number of occasions, as principal, I have argued that the apprenticeship-type framework needs to be embodied within prison education alongside the more traditional forms of learning."

The Manchester College holds Olass contracts for the North East, North West, Kent and Sussex, Yorkshire and Humberside regions, as well as London.

Peter Cox, managing director of the justice division at The Manchester College, said: "We welcome a review which will make education a higher priority in prisons."



A spokesperson for Milton Keynes College, which holds the other Olass contract for the South Central and East and West Midlands regions, declined to comment, as did Olass East of England contractor People Plus.

The review follows a Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) report out in May entitled *The Future of Prison Education Contracts, Delivering Better Outcomes*.

It called for the lifespan of current Olass contracts to be extended a year, stating: "We are very aware of the costs and disruption for staff and learners that comes with re-competition."

"To avoid this, we would therefore recommend that the contracts are extended... subject to building in greater flexibilities and incentives to achieve better outcomes."

A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills spokesperson declined to comment on the review, but said "the focus [of Olass provision] so far has been on preparing prisoners to be able to take up apprenticeship opportunities on their release".

"Ways to engage prisoners in apprenticeships [while in prison] are always being considered," he added.

NEWS

Survey reveals principals' unease with area reviews

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EXCLUSIVE

Almost 90 per cent of principals affected by new area reviews are unhappy with government guidance outlining how the process will work, an exclusive *FE Week* survey has suggested.

Huge unease with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Education (DfE) guidance was revealed in a survey of the 38 principals of colleges whose future has been put in question by the post-16 education and training reviews.

An overwhelming 89 per cent of the respondents, who all chose to remain anonymous, indicated disquiet with the terms of the reviews, which had been leaked to *FE Week*, answering simply whether they were happy or not with the guidance.

Underlying the reviews, covering Birmingham and Solihull, Greater Manchester and Sheffield city region, is the "need" to move towards "fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers," according to the government.

However, one principal answered: "The most significant issue is the exclusion of school sixth forms, university technical colleges (UTCs), free schools and [independent] training providers from the reviews.

"This is not a review of the post-16 sector, but a partial review. It would appear that 'wasteful duplication' is [only] acceptable for A-levels and provision for the most able young people, even to the detriment of quality."

The government published its guidance, introduced by Skills Minister Nick Boles, on the reviews on September 8, and separately identified 22 general FE colleges and 16 sixth form colleges (SFCs) that will be directly involved — but no schools, UTCs, free schools, or independent learning providers (ILPs).

Gripes about their omission featured heavily in the survey responses and mirrored the views already expressed by sector leaders who said that only including general FE colleges and SFCs would paint an incomplete picture of post-16 provision.

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the SFCs' Association, warned that the process was "fundamentally flawed" while Martin

Official responses from colleges involved with area reviews indicated widespread caution over how they will be run.

A spokesperson for Bournville College, one of four FE colleges that will be involved with the Birmingham and Solihull area review, along with three sixth form colleges, said: "All post-16 provision should be included in the area review as all post-16 education is funded from the same source."

She added: "We are working in collaboration with other colleges and organisations to collectively review our curriculum and areas of expertise."



COMMENTS

A selection of the comments made by college principals, who wanted to remain anonymous, to the *FE Week* survey are included below. They were simply asked whether they were happy with the review guidance.

"It is singling out FE colleges when we are not the only post-16 providers. History shows that larger merged institutions do not necessarily bring efficiency."

"They are not looking at colleges in the context of their communities. They talk about financial stability when they are unable to provide guaranteed funding for three years."

"The review of FE costs they are pointing to is very limited in what it has looked at and clearly doesn't understand FE."

"SFCs are included, but newly designated 16 to 19 free schools are not, despite having very low student numbers and poor efficiency."

"In a similar way, school sixth forms with low class sizes and poor efficiency at 16-19 are not included. SFCs offer high quality and a high level of efficiency per pound. They should be excluded from this review unless in financial or performance difficulties."

"The exclusion of school sixth forms, unless volunteering for inclusion, means the basis is inherently flawed."

"Undue haste leading to inconsistency of approach. The fact that a large number of SFA funded organisations are left out so it isn't an area review in any proper sense."

"School sixth forms not required to take part — yet the reviews are supposed to be about efficiency and they are among the least efficient."

"There is a fundamental tension between the independent status of colleges requiring governing bodies to agree to recommendations and the drive to cut costs."

"It is also unrealistic that Colleges and local authorities are required to meet the costs of any proposed structural changes."

See online for extended comments

OFFICIAL COLLEGE RESPONSES SHOW WIDESPREAD CAUTION

Official responses from colleges involved with area reviews indicated widespread caution over how they will be run.

A spokesperson for Bournville College, one of four FE colleges that will be involved with the Birmingham and Solihull area review, along with three sixth form colleges, said: "All post-16 provision should be included in the area review as all post-16 education is funded from the same source."

She added: "We are working in collaboration with other colleges and organisations to collectively review our curriculum and areas of expertise."

"The college is very pleased with current enrolment figures for 2015/16 for both 16-18 and adult students, demonstrating that there's big demand for FE in south-West Birmingham."

"Bournville College, working with its local community, plays a major role in addressing the skills needs of the area."

In a joint statement, the eight general FE colleges and two SFCs that will be involved with the Sheffield city region area review said: "We would also welcome the opportunity for all post-16 provision to be included in the review including school sixth forms, free schools, private training providers, and UTCs in order

to ensure that a full review is undertaken."

It added that all of the colleges "will work with all of the stakeholders to achieve the best possible outcome for FE provision in the region".

"There is an opportunity to increase our contribution to employers by addressing skills gaps and supporting regional economic growth which, in turn, will help to create jobs and careers for our students, and support our local communities," the colleges said.

However, a spokesperson for Birmingham Metropolitan College, which will also be involved with the Birmingham

and Solihull area review, was broadly supportive of the process.

It said: "We are working closely with the FE Commissioner, the SFA, the Education Funding Agency, local colleges and other key local stakeholders to ensure a successful outcome of the review so that the FE sector continues to provide a high quality, flexible response to current and future skills challenges."

None of the 10 FE colleges and 11 SFCs that will be taking part in the Greater Manchester area review responded ahead of publication.

See feweek.co.uk for a list of all the colleges involved in the reviews.

New Feltag group aims to help practitioners

FE WEEK REPORTER
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A new group for FE practitioners aimed at helping them "meet the spirit" of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) was launched at this year's Association for Learning Technology (ALT) conference.

The Feltag Special Interest Group is a forum for teachers, lecturers, learning technologists and others working directly with learners, to discuss the challenges and areas of change in relation to the use of learning technology.

It was developed by ALT to help FE staff working directly with learners to take forward the Feltag agenda and share what was happening across the sector.

"When Feltag came along, there was a lot of work being done at a higher level — at a strategic level — looking at it from an agency perspective, from a senior management perspective," said James Clay, Jisc project manager and one of the founding members of the group.

"One of the things we felt as a committee was that the practitioners are almost being left out.

"There's an assumption sometimes that these practitioners, these teachers and lecturers, will go off and just be able to do it. And actually, no, they need guidance, they need advice and they need support.

"And often that advice, guidance and support is best coming from peers and colleagues.

"There are a lot of young lecturers and young teachers out there who've got amazing ideas but who aren't quite sure how to share them.

"This is about giving them an open platform that's easy to access and easy to use, to work with others in order to share those ideas, and for other individuals and institutions to exploit those ideas in order to help meet the spirit of Feltag."

The group was developed learning technology experts in the FE sector and, in addition to Mr Clay, the other founding members were Rachel Challen, eLearning



Pics: Chris Bull

manager at Loughborough College, Peter Kilcoyne, ILT director at Heart of Worcestershire College, Geoff Rebbeck, e-Learning adviser and Ellen Lessner, e-Learning consultant.

The group is open to all practitioners interested in promoting Feltag themes and wanting to share their ideas.

It aims to provide an opportunity to share and collaborate, and to learn from others how to use technologies to enhance learning and to improve outcomes for learners.

Mr Clay said: "It's about how can we use it to engage learners, to widen participation, for inclusion and accessibility, and also to get teachers and lecturers to understand it's not

something that's an extra, a bolt-on.

"We talk about the fear of technology, it's often about the fear of change, but often these technologies are there to enable change, it's there to make things better for learners, to make things better for learners, easier for staff and better for staff."

The group was designed to work alongside Feltag and its work is expected to tie in to what's happening at a higher level.

"We expect that to feed down into the group and enable us to know if we need to change direction or focus," said Mr Clay.

"But likewise, what we also hope is that if we get enough people involved we'll also be able to push things back up to say, real change

is happening we've got people sharing, we've got people collaborating and changing the way that they work, and they're using learning technology more effectively and efficiently to improve learning outcomes."

In addition to a mailing list and Twitter, the group will host events and webinars to showcase the work of its members.

Members are also encouraged to use technology to develop ways to share their own ideas, such as creating YouTube channels or using instant messaging tools such as Yammer or Slack.

Email FELTAGSIG@jiscmail.ac.uk to join the group's mailing list.

ALT conference — working together and supporting staff

The theme of the 2015 Association for Learning Technology conference was shaping the future of learning together.

The three-day event was held in Manchester from September 8 and from an FE and skills sector perspective there was a focus on working together to support staff, and to give them the skills they need to use technology effectively.

Diana Laurillard, Rachel Challen and Neil Morris presented Blended Learning Essentials, a new open course available through Future Learn for practitioners in the vocational education and training sector.

"One of the great difficulties for the teaching practitioner, whether they're working in skills-based learning, adult and community learning or

FE college, is they all are expected somehow to embrace new technologies while also doing the day job," said Ms Laurillard.

"The idea of the course was to make it feasible for anyone in the sector who wants to feel they know what it's about to get in touch with it and get some experience of it, and feel supported in that process."

The course, which is split into two parts, introduces some of the tools that are available and how to use them, as well as how to embed what they've learned into practice. It's designed so that participants can learn from each other, through case studies and by sharing their own experiences of what's worked and what hasn't.

The aim is that it will create a sustainable

community, in which participants can continue to share and collaborate after the course is finished.

"If you've registered in the course, you can get back to it. That means that you can stay in those groups, you can stay arguing that point, you can stay talking to other colleagues and peers about what is the best way to go about this," said Ms Laurillard.

"That's how any area builds its knowledge. And it keeps everything renewed, because the technologies keep changing. It's never going to go away."

A different approach to supporting staff was presented by Sussex Downs College, in a talk on engaging learners in an active dialogue around

their digital expectation and experiences.

Through its Student Digital Leaders project, the college has brought in its learners to evaluate what the college is doing, and to help them to think differently and realise opportunities they may be missing. Learners have also worked one-to-one with staff to teach them to use the technology.

Project manager John Webber said: "It's really vital to the next phase in developing new technology. We've got limited resources and limited time, so we need to be using the best intelligence we can in developing what we're doing and these young students and the other that will work with us across the college will be vital in helping us steer that."

Data talks as FE Choices to shut

FE WEEK REPORTER
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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is holding talks with government officials over the collection and presentation of performance data as it was revealed that the FE Choices website is to close.

The website is to shut next month after three-and-a-half years, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) announced on Wednesday (September 9).

The website, which was previously known as the Framework for Excellence and which allows the public to compare the performance of providers, is set to close at the end of October. An SFA spokesperson said the move comes as part of the wider programme to move all government websites to GOV.UK.

Stewart Segal, AELP chief executive, told *FE Week*: "We are aware of the strategy to consolidate data onto fewer web sites and to migrate the data to GOV.UK. Customers of FE should have the data available to them and training providers will always provide performance data as part of their discussions with customers."

"We are in discussions with the government on what performance data would be useful and how that should be presented."

A spokesperson for the Association of

Colleges said: "As accountability measures for the FE sector are being updated it does not come as a surprise that the FE Choices website is closing with content being moved to Gov.uk. This is in line with other government initiatives."

An *FE Week* exclusive six months after the website launched in January 2012 revealed 6,230 people had viewed it. The figures, released under the Freedom of Information Act, further showed that the website had been visited by 1,246 'unique' visitors on average each month. The request, submitted by *FE Week*, also revealed that the FE Choices website had cost the taxpayer more than £2.3m up to that point. The website itself had cost £630,000 to build, with the remaining £1.7m spent on the gathering and production of data.

The figures worked out as a cost to the taxpayer of £375 per visitor and the coverage was picked up by *Private Eye*, which questioned whether FE Choices "may be one of the most expensively pointless government websites yet".

However, while the website is closing, the SFA spokesperson said it would "continue to make all FE Choices data available on GOV.UK and DATA.GOV.UK, with performance indicators held on the National Careers Service website."

"Our last update to the website was on Thursday, September 3, when we published the 2014 to 2015 learner satisfaction data," they said. "FE Choices satisfaction surveys will continue to run as normal, with the next survey opening on Monday, November 2."

Morgan concedes sector 'fragile'

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The FE sector is a "fragile" state, Education Secretary Nicky Morgan (pictured), has conceded.

She made the comments during a meeting of the House of Commons Education Select Committee on Wednesday (September 9), during which she faced a grilling from MPs over her department's policies.

The issue of funding in the FE sector was first mentioned by Gateshead Labour MP Ian Mearns, who said there was a "looming concern" about a funding crisis in FE, with "possibly 10 to 15 per cent of the sector facing significant deficit budgets within the next 18 to 24 months".

Ms Morgan said: "We are aware that the FE sector is, I think fragile is probably the way to put it, and that's why we have started a process of these area-based reviews, looking at provision in local areas and making sure that we can help colleges to be robust, in the best of financial health.

"But [we also want] to make sure there is no over-lapping provision, that people are working together, that actually if colleges need to get bigger in order to be stable, that's the sort of thing

that we want the colleges and the areas, as I say, to be thinking about together."

Asked if she agreed the area reviews were "flawed" because they only compelled general FE and sixth form colleges to be involved and not school sixth forms, Ms Morgan said she would encourage "all post-16 providers" to take part, but that a "particular issue" with FE institutions had been brought to her department's attention.

Ms Morgan said she would "strongly urge" colleges and schools to "work together" as part of the reviews, and said both she and Skills Minister Nick Boles were "in the market" for hearing proposals from areas.

The education secretary was also pressed on whether funding for 16 to 19-year-olds could be brought in line with funding for the 14 to 16 stage, but said funding was currently being reviewed as part of the government's spending review, the findings of which are due this autumn.



Costs review 'a waste of time'

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A review of the costs of running FE institutions has been branded a "waste of time" and in need of "further work". The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Education and The Treasury have published a 17-slide presentation on their joint review of FE costs, which was commissioned in February and was carried out over six weeks from March. In February 2015, the Treasury, BIS and DfE commissioned a 'Joint review of Further Education (FE) cost drivers' to understand the funding, cost drivers and outcomes of the FE system in England, with a particular focus on teaching costs, E&M provision and financial management.

The study analysed financial health metrics for 1,232 FE institutions and cost breakdowns for 341 colleges, using Association of Colleges information and carried out 20 "deep dive visits".

The review found, among other things, that there was a "significant difference" in profitability of individual providers and that providers with the best financial management drew their senior managers from the private sector and education sector.

It also found that the overall FE system operates at a 1 per cent profit, meaning any future reduction in funding "would need to be offset across the system by a reduction in

costs, additional income generation or reduction in outputs".

But the review has been criticised by Steve Hewitt, a college funding manager and expert, who took to Twitter to complain.

He said: "Anyone else asked for the Joint Review of FE Costs thing...? I have and it is a laugh riot!

"Apparently there is no link between spend and outcome, so the whole thing is a waste of time. Key point is they claim Academies spend 11 per cent on 'admin' whereas FE spends 17 per cent. Clearly we know why that is and that it's all the government's fault but it's the sort of stat that doesn't go away."

Mr Hewitt also told *FE Week*: "You can't compare a general FE college admin spend to an academy's admin spend, academies don't have to put up with 90 per cent of what we do." A spokesperson for the Association of Colleges said: "The 'joint review of FE costs' was carried out in March and focused on English and maths.

"The slides have only just been published and while some of the analysis is helpful, some conclusions need further work."



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30th September
2015



Clockwise, and from left: TeamUK competitor Jasmine Field unable to hide her delight at winning the John Barnes award; Peter Lauener, Rianne Chester with her Albert Vidal award and Find A Future chair Carole Stott; TeamUK competitors Ben Pritchard, Danny Hoang, Sam Turner, Jonathan Gill and Matthew Beesley; Richard Harrington MP; competitors perform the TeamUK chant; and Skills Minister Nick Boles is shown some pictures from Sao Paulo by Matthew Beesley



A golden homecoming



@REBECCAJONES923
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

TeamUK's outstanding WorldSkills competitors received a rapturous welcome home with a celebration event in the heart of London.

Skills Minister Nick Boles and Prime Minister David Cameron's apprenticeship adviser Richard Harrington, MP for Watford, were among the guests as most of the TeamUK's 40 competitors were honoured on Tuesday, September 8, at Dean's Yard, near Westminster.

The UK's official delegate and funding agencies chief executive Peter Lauener and Edge Foundation acting chief executive David Harbourne were also in attendance to see the team's 21 medallions for excellence handed out.

The medals came in addition to the three

gold, four silver, and two bronze, which gave TeamUK 46 points in total to place it seventh in the overall medals table — up three places on WorldSkills Leipzig two years ago.

An extra two awards were also presented at the event — the Woodbine Parish Award for highest scoring competitors who did not win a medal at WorldSkills was given to Martin McLaughlin, aged 19 and from Northern Ireland's North West Regional College, for wall and floor tiling and Hayley Edwards, 19 and from Middlesbrough College, for health and social care.

The John Barnes Award for contributing most to TeamUK morale went to Jasmine Field, 20 and from the Fashion Retail Academy, for visual merchandising and window dressing.

Mr Harrington said: "If I may begin with a 'shout out' to my constituent Danny Hoang [chef competitor], who won a Medallion for

Excellence — Watford is proud of you, Danny!

"The achievements of TeamUK are nothing short of incredible and each and every one of you deserves special recognition."

Beauty therapist Rianne Chester, 22 and from Warrington Collegiate, who made TeamUK history by being awarded the Albert Vidal award for highest overall competitor's score on top of a gold medal, said: "The support I've had is amazing and the whole experience has given me so much more confidence and it has completely changed my life."

A new Edexcel level four qualification was unveiled. It was designed to recognise individuals at competitions who have gone beyond the competence of a skill and recognise those skills such as planning, leadership, motivation, problem-solving and psychology of performance and

it was awarded to 62 members of the squad from which TeamUK was drawn.

Mr Lauener said: "What we now really need is all of that experience, understanding and all of that knowledge working its way to the home system so that many more young people get the best skills on offer."

Christine Doubleday, director of education and development at Find a Future, which manages the UK's entry into the WorldSkills competition, said: "This has been the best ever UK performance in UK WorldSkills international history."

To revisit the amazing successes of TeamUK at WorldSkills visit feweek.co.uk for colourful and picture-packed 24-page supplement that was produced on location in Sao Paulo.

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FE WEEK COMMENT



Looking for big topslicers

The issue of top-slicing, of withholding public funding from the front line of education and training in the form of a 'management fee' to subcontractors, has featured in these pages before.

And FE Week has always been supportive of Skills Funding Agency (SFA) efforts to bring some transparency and accountability to this practice.

But, up until this point, and thankfully no further than November 23, these efforts have had no teeth.

It is for this reason that once again FE Week is supportive of the SFA in putting forward the very serious threat of a suspension of funding for non-compliance.

Ultimately, all this will mean is that lead providers are far more likely to comply, to reveal how much they topslice on each contract — it does not mean they must adopt fair management fee levels.

However, what the SFA's threat will allow, is for FE Week to watch closely the practices of those who think it's reasonable to cream off 40 per cent of SFA cash before handing on a contract.

To those providers I would say we'll be looking for you, and we'll be looking at you.

Chris Henwood

chris.henwood@feweek.co.uk

TOP #ALTC TWEETS
(SEE PAGE 4)

@RosieJHJones
#altc learning technologies don't always have to be exciting or innovative - they need to be useful

@digisim
#altc just proves that it's much more about the people than the tech. We should carry that thought back to our places of work

@MarenDeepwell
Embrace technology - a key principle for #FE area review steering groups #altc

@bobharrisonset
#altc We must challenge the misinformed view in FE providers/policy makers that online/blended=cheap! It isn't!

@som50579
#Feltag is a major driver in FE to support FE to improve #learner outcomes with #technology #altc



Whatever happened to Cable's dual mandate consultation?

@FCDWHITTAKER

FWHITTAKER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Former Business Secretary Dr Vince Cable's (pictured left) 'dual mandate' consultation looks likely to have been binned by officials after the deadline for a government response passed without note.

The 90-page consultation document put 44 questions to the FE sector on what was described as its 'dual mandate' — vocational learning for those who achieved at school and don't want to go to university, and a 'second chance sector' for those who didn't get their GCSEs at school.

But the consultation closed on June 16, and official rules say the government should have published its response, or a statement explaining why its response was not forthcoming, by Tuesday, September 8.

But nothing had been released by the government by the time *FE Week* went to press, and the Department for Business, Innovation



and Skills did not respond to questions about the consultation's future.

While some sector leaders have speculated that other policies announced since the general election could be to blame for the delay, the University and College Union (UCU) has nevertheless called for the response to be issued "promptly".

Andrew Harden, UCU head of FE, said: "The FE sector has experienced massive funding cuts and rapid policy change in recent years.

"We need a prompt response to the dual mandate consultation which sets out a clear vision and proper funding for the future of FE at all levels. This will allow providers to plan ahead and help to inform the area reviews which are now being undertaken."

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said the delay could be explained by events since the general election, including the apprenticeship levy announcement.

He added: "In any event, we said in our response that the term dual mandate was confusing and that the variety of learners, employers and providers in the FE and skills

sector could not be divided into two distinct routes.

"This is not to say that it was an initiative of little value because the consultation offered AELP an opportunity to submit views on a wide range of questions."

David Corke (pictured right), director of education skills and policy at the Association of Colleges, said the government's productivity plan and post-16 area reviews guidance had offered "more detail of its vision for a strong professional and technical education system to help increase productivity".



He added: "Whatever the outcome of the consultation it is important for the wider UK economy that colleges are supported to be able to continue both technical and professional education as well as education and training for people who didn't do well at school."

"We are continuing to discuss the government's ambition with them, prioritising the interests of the students, employers and communities that colleges support."

COMMENTS

Looking ahead to a 'watershed year'

The time is long past to have agencies 'raise awareness' for updating skills and processes including adopting FELTAG principles. Not because of an edict from funding agencies, but because it makes sense if they want to stay in business. 'Business', still a dirty word to many, a mystery to some.

In my role, I still find organisations that should know better but are still only thinking about making change' and regard staff development as a tick box exercise that occurs a few times each year.

Teaching staff in general know what can be done to make this cultural change, but implementing change must be endorsed from

the top and many are still too busy 'standing on the edge, shouting at the water.'

For the staff and the learners' sake, dive in and get wet.

Colin Gallacher

Future of nearly 40 colleges in question as BIS and DfE reveals those facing area reviews

What use is the review without all the schools involved in post 16 education?

Jane Jones

In reply to Jane Jones

You're assuming that the purpose of the review is to look at educational and training provision across an area and to establish what best meets the needs of the local economy and population.

Since it is about cost cutting, and political expediency, schools have no need to be involved since the policy of allowing academies and free schools with sixth forms, to spring up everywhere, whether they're needed or not, trumps any other sensible approach.

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PROFILE

66

I thought I would go to a beauty induction day at Warrington Collegiate and that was it – I was in love with it from there on. I can't imagine doing anything else now



NO HIDING THE CHESTER

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After a double celebration for being crowned the world's best beauty therapist and making Team UK history for achieving the highest score at this year's World Skills competition in Sao Paulo, Rianne Chester can't hide her beaming smile.

The former Warrington Collegiate student took some time out amid the excitement of the Team UK welcome home event in London to speak to *FE Week* about her road to success.

Rianne, aged 22, finished secondary school in 2009 with an impressive array of GCSE grades and her teachers wanting her to go follow an academic route that would lead her to university.

Undecided as to what to study and feeling pressured to go university, Rianne turned to her family for advice. They suggested that she might enjoy going into FE to study beauty therapy as they believed she was creative and would shine in the profession.

"At the time beauty therapy was just not an option for me. However, I thought I would go to a beauty induction day at Warrington Collegiate and that was it – I was in love with

it from there on," she recalls.

"I can't imagine doing anything else now." The aspiring beauty therapist started the college in 2011 where she was placed into the mature class after quickly picking up the tricks of the beauty trade.

"I started off in the 16 to 19-year-old class, but my tutors wanted me to go with the adult learners, because that class was progressing a little bit more and picking up things a little bit faster," she says.

As Rianne was enjoying her studies and impressing tutors during her level two course in beauty therapy, the college put her forward to compete in a regional beauty competition. However, Rianne explains that it was not all plain sailing at first as she was unsuccessful in achieving any medals.

But this didn't stop the ambitious student from advancing her skills and obtaining a level three qualification in beauty therapy and going on to win a silver medal at her next regional competition, the EuroSkills in Lille last year.

"From there I was invited to compete in the nationals but I didn't get anything from there either," she says as her smile widens and she starts to laugh.

But this year, Rianne's hard work paid off as she made it through to the WorldSkills

2015 competition in Sao Paulo, winning both a gold medal and being honoured with the illustrious Albert Vidal Award for scoring the greatest number of points among all competitors from every nation and region taking part — making Team UK history by being the first British competitor ever to win the award.

But how did she get involved with WorldSkills?

"It was actually one of the WorldSkills talent judges that scouted me and gave me a call a few months later to see if I wanted to try out the competition back in 2010," she says.

The determined beautician has received huge support from her family and friends throughout her journey to WorldSkills 2015.

She explains: "I've competed for five years — usually the cycle is only two-and-a-half years — but I've done two cycles so I've done it for five. So it's been a really long process but the support I have had has been brilliant."

WorldSkills has had an enormous impact on Rianne and has been an experience that has brought her out of her shell and has been a springboard for progressing with her career.

"It's given me so much more confidence.

I used to work in a salon but I decided to open my own business last October, so it has completely changed my life — but obviously in a very good way," she says.

"Traveling and getting to meet all kinds of people has been such a great experience because I used to be quite shy when I was 17 and I wouldn't really speak to anybody new."

"And then having to travel on my own and meet different people has just completely changed my whole perspective on life."

"Now I'll go anywhere, do anything and speak to anyone, which is something if someone told me at 17 I would never have believed them."

Rianne describes her journey to Sao Paulo as being such a great opportunity and she was filled with the excitement and anticipation of being part of the vibrant atmosphere while working her hardest to try and achieve top marks in each competition round.

"The atmosphere at the opening ceremony was absolutely spectacular. We knew the carnival atmosphere was going to be amazing but we didn't actually expect it to be that good," she recalls.

To win her gold medal Rianne had an intense four days of competing which included carrying out a spa body treatment,



GRIN

manicure and pedicure, French gels with evening make up, full body fancy makeup and nail art, and a specialised massage.

When Rianne's results were announced on the night of the closing ceremony for not only the gold medal but the Albert Vidal Award she was truly overwhelmed.

"It was ridiculous. I wasn't expecting a gold medal to be completely honest, yet alone the Albert Vidal Award," she says.

Since returning home after her outstanding achievements, Rianne reflects on how taking the FE route has, she says, made her the person she is today.

However, she does believe that people can still be narrow-minded in their views on vocational learning and she wants to find a way to make WorldSkills known to a wider range of people.

"A lot of people — especially when you talk about the beauty industry — tend to have that general view that you go to college for that 'easy option,'" she explains.

"People aren't really broad-minded when they actually think about the different career paths you can take within beauty therapy.

"If they actually take a minute to think that vocational skills are what makes the economy grow, and what makes the country what it is now then the stigma

could be dropped."

"It feels like FE courses are taken for granted and people seem to think doing something academic or studying law is the job to be in, when in reality there are just as important careers which bring just as much, if not more, to our economy," she adds.

With the confidence and success competing has given Rianne, she decided to leave the salon she worked at to set up her own mobile beauty business, which is called Beauty by Rianne.

"Last year I decided it was the right time to open my own business," she explains.

"At first it was more of a sideline and WorldSkills was my main focus, but now I'm home I can look into settling down in one main area and expanding the business.

"After having something as amazing as WorldSkills in your life, you don't really want to go back to a normal life as you always strive for that little bit more."

Rianne is so pleased that she steered away from the pressure of going into higher education and went on to achieve success by following her creative passions and run her own business by the age of just 22.

She ends the conversation reflecting on WorldSkills and says: "If competitions were more advertised and well known to the public then people might have a different view on FE and it might inspire more people to study vocational subjects and change their way of thinking that to be socially accepted they don't have to have a high-flying academic career.

"Then more people will see that they can do something creative or they can do something they love but still have an amazing career out of it and be really successful."



Rianne studied her beauty therapy level two and three at Warrington Collegiate which she started in 2009 and finished in 2011.



When Rianne was 17, she competed at UK Skills regional heats North West 2010 for beauty, achieving second place.



Rianne was asked to compete for a place in Squad UK for WorldSkills Leipzig 2013 and was successfully selected. However she didn't make the team.



Rianne was asked back to compete for a place in Squad UK for WorldSkills São Paulo 2015. She was named in Squad UK in 2014.



As part of Squad UK, Rianne competed at EuroSkills Lille in October, 2014 and won Silver.

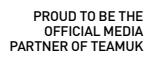


Rianne competed for a place in Team UK in June 2015 and was chosen to represent the UK in Beauty Therapy at WorldSkills São Paulo 2015. Rianne won Gold and the Albert Vidal Medal.



Rianne Chester and the rest of Team UK at their welcome home event in London after returning from WorldSkills 2015 in São Paulo





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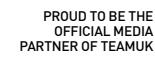


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Team UK



EXPERTS

THE INDY SCENE

John Hyde is the chairman of HIT Training, a hospitality training provider that operates across England, and on the second Monday of every month he writes in *FE Week* about issues affecting independent learning providers

With the summer holidays over, a new contract year starting, let's silence the press criticism of apprenticeships by producing outstanding performances from our learners, inspired by the stunning results of the UK WorldSkills team.

I started my holiday on a Wednesday, for HIT next day the dreaded Ofsted phone call came for a full inspection the following Monday. Co-incidence or Machiavellian intent?

It was surreal to watch the inspection unfold by the plethora of emails flying around my company while sunning on the beach.

Implementation and delivery of apprenticeships is more complex than can be defined on a page or two

Like all previous inspections we were again graded 'good' overall.

This was particular pleasing because we have doubled the size of the company in staff, offices and learner numbers since our last inspection in 2012.

The benefits of the inspection to the company is highly dependent on the calibre of the lead inspector and the quality and knowledge of the inspectors.

This inspection provided thoughtful advice, constructive criticism and a very well balanced and fair overview of HIT with several positive recommendations for our improvement.

Two reports produced this summer which have relevance to apprentices and skills training were from the Edge Foundation and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development producing interesting facts about graduate destinations and employment.

The reports highlighted the difficulties certain graduates, with non-vocational degrees had in finding employment and in more than 40 per cent of cases took a job not requiring a degree.

At HIT, the highest number of applicants for a hospitality and catering apprenticeship we turn away as they fail the eligibility criteria are graduates looking to enter our industry, not the much maligned 'immigrants'.

However, inspirational the political intent

of 50 per cent of school-leavers going to university was, the unintended consequences were the closing of our polytechnic education with the disappearance of HNDs and other technician qualifications the country so urgently needs now.

Let us hope the intended consequences of Trailblazer apprenticeship funded by a levy don't produce unintended consequences and disasters.

Bad press about apprenticeships continues in the national press and disturbingly on apprenticeship-friendly websites.

Critics fail to realise apprentices are already employed and reflect the labour market.

Economic growth comes from the service sector, mainly level two where apprenticeships are needed both for the thousands of new entrants and to up-skill the existing workforce to increase their productivity levels.

Lazy research by the national press ignores customer satisfaction rates in excess of 90 per cent from both employers and learners participating on apprenticeship programmes from surveys conducted by Mori for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Most commercial organisations, and especially individual politicians, would love such high satisfaction ratings.

BIS's response to quality issues is to introduce end-testing to Trailblazer apprenticeships. How can an end test replace quality measures currently in place which disappear with Trailblazers? Measures such as continuous assessment, awarding bodies quality assurance, schemes of work, contracted learner reviews, initial assessment, suitability of the employer (health and safety, employment procedures, willingness to release apprentices for off-job training)?

Without a prescribed programme of training linked to funding inputs, quality is in greater danger with these employer 'freedoms' in place.

The danger comes two or three years down the line when their quality is seen to drop.

BIS will introduce draconian measures to restore quality which will be more complex than the SASE standards currently in place.

As Skills Minister Nick Bowles realises, the number of trailblazer standards grow and grow and are not the simple short list promised to parliament.

Similarly implementation and delivery of apprenticeships is more complex than can be defined on a page or two. External checks are required throughout the programme to protect government funds, the integrity of the brand and the substance of the training and development offered to the individual apprentice.



FELICITY MITCHELL

Deputy adjudicator, senior leadership team, Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education

'Far too early to tell if higher education in FE complaints will rise'

September 1, 2015, has gone down in FE as the date from which complaints about the sector's higher education provision were handled in same way that university complaints are. Felicity Mitchell outlines the change, why it has happened and considers whether principals should be worried.

The Higher Education Act 2004 required the appointment of an independent body to run a student complaint Scheme in England and Wales and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education was designated to operate this Scheme in January 2005.

The Act defined which institutions were required to join the Scheme and, thus, whose students could access the OIA. Students studying for a higher education qualification at an FE college could complain to the OIA, but only where the qualification they were studying for was awarded by a university and only then about something that was the responsibility of that university. So for example, the OIA could consider a complaint about the outcome of an academic appeal which the university considered, but not a service which the college had provided.

Somewhere in England or Wales a student is raising an issue with their college which will escalate to a complaint, and will become the first eligible complaint received by the OIA about an FE college

It was not always clear whether a student at a college could complain to the OIA or not, and what they could complain about. So, students with a complaint about course content might be bounced back and forth between their college and the university that awarded their qualification, while each argued that the other was responsible.

Equally, it was unfair that students studying at a university were able to complain to an independent body about anything to do with their studies, while students studying for the same award but at a college could only complain about some aspects.

The 2011 White Paper, Students at the Heart of the System, promised to change this, but legislation was not forthcoming.

The opportunity for change came with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 which extended membership of the OIA Scheme to include all providers offering higher education courses designated for student support funding, and all providers with degree-awarding powers.

The changes come into effect in relation to complaints arising after September 1, 2015. This means that most higher education students can now access the OIA Scheme no matter where they choose to study.

FE colleges come to the OIA from a position of strength. Many are already familiar with the OIA from complaints by students on courses leading to awards conferred by partner universities. They have extensive experience of dealing with complaints and have tried and tested procedures. Over recent months, staff from many colleges have attended OIA introductory workshops or discussed complaints handling with the OIA.

An excellent resource for colleges is the OIA's Good Practice Framework for handling Complaints and Academic Appeals [visit feweek.co.uk for live link] which sets out general principles and operational guidance on dealing with issues students raise. This is complemented by guidance the OIA has provided to colleges and universities about how to handle complaints in the context of collaborative provision. There will of course be challenges ahead. During the last 10 years, the profile of complaints received by the OIA has been remarkably stable — around 60 per cent relate to academic outcomes. But we expect that the next few years may throw up complaints that we have not seen before.

The question we are most often asked is whether this change will increase the volume of complaints from higher education students studying in FE colleges. The answer — it is far too early to tell.

We have, for some time, been working with higher education providers to encourage the early resolution of complaints, so that students do not need to bring complaints to the OIA. The FE colleges we have spoken to are already alert to the value of sorting out issues locally. Somewhere in England or Wales a student is raising an issue with their college which will escalate to a complaint, and will become the first eligible complaint received by the OIA about an FE college.

In the months before that happens we will continue to work with colleges to improve our understanding of their students and their processes, and to make sure that we are able to support them as they continue to develop their practice in complaints handling.

Gerry McDonald outlines the reasons and process behind his college's application to open a free school and considers why it was turned down.

The ability of FE to redefine itself is perhaps its defining characteristic.

This can, of course, serve us well in challenging times when funding and competitive pressures make it difficult to hold on to treasured notions of an immutable core.

Dame Ruth Silver's adaptive layer has become a shorthand for describing a sector that often finds definition illusive. And maybe that's no bad thing. Adaptation requires creative thinking and new approaches and that is where FE excels.

Adaptation is more necessary now than ever before. Not least because the traditional boundaries between the buildings blocks of the education system are in flux. It was not surprising therefore that the governors of Tower Hamlets College, opposite Canary Wharf, that icon of regeneration, decided to take a radical approach to defining our mission and how we should deliver it. The notion that we should pursue a free school application took shape.

The idea wasn't formed in a vacuum. In 2014, we applied for, and were granted, direct entry at 14. With strong support from our local authority, we shaped an innovative programme for migrant families, mostly newly arrived in the UK with a child aged 14 or 15 to benefit from an intensive English-focused programme. Our first cohort made

With reviews of FE provision across England getting under way, Nigel Rayner looks at whether any lessons can be learned from the Scottish experience of college reviews.

Hot on the heels of the government's statement that it wants to see 'fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient' providers of FE in England, a number of colleges have already announced plans to join forces.

And there's little doubt that more will likely follow, either as 'closer collaborations' or more formal mergers. In Scotland, FE is coming out the other side of a similar initiative and few would argue that the sector has been transformed. From a funding perspective, the 37 colleges that existed in 2011-12 have been merged into 20 institutions, which are organised into 13 regions.

Having worked closely with some of these institutions during their transition, their experiences demonstrate that change can also bring the opportunity to improve the student experience and ensure a stronger post-16 offering for the future.

An analysis of the 2013 and 2014 college finance records submitted to the Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency suggests that around one-in-four English FE colleges is managing to thrive and grow both their income and surplus, in what some might describe as among the most challenging educational landscapes in recent years.

This underlines an important point. Regardless of their geographical location,



GERRY MCDONALD

Principal, Tower Hamlets College

Redefining FE's mission across age ranges and historical sector divides

rapid progress with 89 per cent achieving grade C in maths, in just one year.

It is worth saying that our decision to apply to open a free school wasn't politically motivated. It was pragmatic. We are a good college with outstanding business and Esol provision and strong finances. But these attributes would not protect us from new entrants to the crowded London education market or protect our shrinking core.

The process of establishing a free school is best described in two stages. The first is setting up your group and forming a company to act as the legal entity for the new school. That was straightforward. The college's business and community clients and contacts proved a rich source of expertise and we were able to quickly bring together experienced professionals, giving us the breadth of practical support required.

The difficulty then is ensuring the right

level of separation from the college. In theory the school is quite separate and operates at arm's length. In reality, the college is the prime mover and de facto sponsor. The divide could be seen as rather artificial.

More difficult was establishing the need for our proposed school. We were clear about the specialism — business and finance — representing our location and curriculum expertise. The challenge is establishing actual parent need. This involved asking parents of 8 and 9-year-olds to send their child to an as yet unbuilt school when they reach 11. A tough sell indeed. We got there because our strong proposition about linking educational opportunity to jobs in businesses and finance was convincing. Canary Wharf is within Tower Hamlets but has some way to go in recruiting the borough's residents.

We have made strong progress including placing more than 50 young people into

paid year-long internships with a major accounting firm but there is more to do. Parents we spoke to appreciate that and what our new school could offer.

As reported in *FE Week* last week, our bid didn't get through. I don't see a conspiracy against FE here. Feedback was clear and fair and we have been asked to resubmit in October. We need to show how the specialism will be delivered throughout the school and bring a current secondary head teacher on to our board. Fair enough.

Our decision to apply to open a free school wasn't politically motivated. It was pragmatic

Should colleges pursue free schools? That's hard to answer for the whole sector; so much depends on local demography and need. Our view is that redefining FE's mission across age ranges and historical sector divides is a necessary evolution at a time of funding challenge.



NIGEL RAYNER

Director of Capita further and higher education

Learning merger lessons south of the border

there are some common factors that successful FE institutions share, whether they are stand-alone or have been merged with other providers.

They understand the needs of their local region, ensure they run efficiently and most importantly, engage with students, staff, employers and other stakeholders to attract and retain students.

There are some important lessons English colleges can learn from the experiences of their Scottish counterparts when it comes to achieving a successful merger, some of which are outlined below.

Firstly, ensure transparency. For a partnership to work, staff across all institutions involved need to be kept fully informed each step of the way to help encourage 'buy-in' and support for the process. A culture of change can be difficult to embed in any organisation, but good communication is a vital starting point.

Secondly, consider the student at every

step. It's easy to get bogged down in details of how internal processes will work post-merger and risk losing sight of the student. With student experience being critical to successful recruitment and retention — and therefore funding — it's essential to consider the impact of every change on current and prospective students.

Thirdly, little issues in a smaller organisation will be exacerbated in a larger one, so they need to be tackled. For one Scottish college, there was a real need to address poor student retention. On merging, they introduced electronic registration, which not only saved time, but staff could monitor students' attendance more closely. This meant they could quickly spot any student who wasn't turning up regularly and take action.

Don't just do what you've always done, is next. Look at new ways that will help a larger organisation run more efficiently. Some Scottish colleges used their merger as an

opportunity to move the whole applications process online, for example. Use the change as a chance to review which processes are eating up many hours of administration time and therefore costs.

There are some important lessons English colleges can learn from the experiences of their Scottish counterparts when it comes to achieving a successful merger

And finally, and above all, address learners' needs. Post-16 education in Scotland has been on a complex journey and some tough decisions have been made along the way. However, it is important to underline that as the story continues to unfold, there are positives. The Audit Scotland report, published earlier this year, found that reforms have had a 'minimal negative impact' on students and English colleges should take encouragement from this.

No matter what the future holds, students must remain at the heart of FE and, as always — whatever shape or size they take — the most successful colleges will be the ones that focus unerringly on improving the student experience.

CAMPUS ROUND-UP



Barnsley College learners with Barnsley professional footballer Marc Roberts (sixth from left) and college sport programme manager Mark Ryan (seventh from left)

Letting football do the talking

Barnsley professional footballer Marc Roberts headed back to his roots when he visited his local college's sports department.

The former Barnsley College sports student returned to the Honeywell campus to speak to learners at a sports fair.

The 25-year-old defender also talked about his experiences at college and his journey into The Beautiful Game.

"My time at college was important and I developed most as a footballer during those

years," said Marc.

"I went to university after college so I emphasised the importance of education to the students, even for those who want to pursue a sporting career."

Mark Ryan, sport programme manager at the college, said: "Marc was an excellent student who worked extremely hard as an academic and a footballer."

"It's absolutely fantastic when you see ex-students achieve and progress as Marc has into professional football."

Learner Sunil makes headlines



Above: Uxbridge College learner Sunil Bhatoy appears on BBC London News
Right: BBC reporter Mahfuz Sadique interviews Uxbridge College learner Sunil

Meet 17-year-old Sunil Bhatoy — you may have already seen him on the BBC discussing Uxbridge College's new brand games, animation and VFX skills course.

The footage, which was featured in two primetime slots on BBC London News, was shot in the Hillingdon college's IT and Media Centre

And Sunil, who was interviewed by reporter Mahfuz Sadique, is well qualified to study the course — a level three extended diploma designed to address creative industry shortages — as he is



one of its first cohort.

"The industry's a lot different to other industries, because I find that it's a lot freer and you can be a lot more expressive with your ideas," he said.

"You can literally come up with something brand new that the world hasn't seen."

Former *My Family* star takes college route to courtroom

A former child star of a popular primetime television show has grown up and swapped his acting career for life as a human rights barrister with the help of City and Islington College, writes Billy Camden.

You'd think Gabriel Thomson's role as Michael Harper in BBC sitcom *My Family* from the tender age of 13 might one day lead to a courtroom drama later in his acting career — and that's where he's heading 15 years later, sort of.

But he decided against a life on screen and is aiming to go before judges, on the right side of the law, as a human rights barrister thanks to City and Islington College.

He wanted to refuel his childhood passion for law, which he had to put to one side while he featured on the 11-series show.

"I had grown up acting, pretty much falling into the role on *My Family* so when that finished I took a moment to ask myself 'is this really what I want to do for the rest of my life? Is this my calling?'" Gabriel told *FE Week*.

"There are so many young actors out there that are really passionate and really want to make it and I think that somewhere over the years I lost some of that passion."

Having not studied A-levels due to his acting career, the 28-year-old, who was once tipped to be Harry Potter before losing out to Daniel Radcliffe, enrolled on a humanities and social science: access to higher education diploma, where he excelled.

And Gabriel said the transition from the acting studio to the classroom has been "great".

"It was nice going from being a celebrity to a normal every day lad. It is nice to go back and get stuck into something completely different," he said.

"After the first initial shock of the other students seeing me around the college and going 'look it's him from *My Family*', no one cared really, they just got on with it. We were all in the same boat really to get to university and everything else, so that was great."

He added: "While doing *My Family* my education in quite a few ways suffered. I had tutors and things but you can't really substitute actually being there. This access course seemed

like the best way to get back into education and get into university."

Gabriel will begin studying a degree in philosophy at King's College London later this month with the ambition of becoming a human rights barrister.

Grant Glendinning, centre director at the City and Islington's centre for lifelong learning, said: "Access courses provide a potentially life-changing platform for



students from all backgrounds to progress to university. We are very proud of Gabriel's academic achievement this year."

Gabriel will now focus on his "strong sense of injustices and inequalities in the world" to "help people out who are in need".

He did however admit that his acting days are not all over. He intends on joining King's College London's Shakespeare theatre group.

"I'm not going to do any more professional acting, I just want to do it for fun," he said.

**FEATURED
CAMPUS
ROUND-UP**



My Family
Created by Fred Barron
Broadcast by BBC One for 11 series 2000 – 2011
121 episodes
Average viewing figures per episode: 7.2 million
Most watched sitcom in the United Kingdom in 2008
Starred Robert Lindsay as Ben Harper, Zoë Wanamaker as his wife Susan, and Kris Marshall, Daniela Denby-Ashe and Gabriel as their children, Nick, Janey and Michael

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?

Send your stories with pictures to campus@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course details of students where applicable

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

City of Bristol College has announced that Lee Probert will be its new principal come January.

He is currently deputy chief executive at Hull College Group and before that was a Learning and Skills Council director.

Mr Probert said: "Bristol is a vibrant and creative city and I look forward to relocating to the area to work with staff, students and partners to lead the next phase of the college's development.

"The board of governors have recently approved a new strategy for the college and I look forward to leading its implementation and positioning the college as a great place to learn."

The appointment follows the resignation of Lynn Merilion, who is leaving the college for personal reasons, as previously reported in FE Week.

Meanwhile, Dudley College dipped into the transfer market this summer and appointed ex-footballer Andy Comyn as its new vice principal of financial strategy and control.

Mr Comyn played football professionally

for Blackburn Rovers and then Manchester United while at school, and continued playing for Manchester United during his time at Birmingham University, where he studied physics.

After completing his degree, his professional football career continued with Aston Villa, Derby County, Plymouth Argyle and West Bromwich Albion.

Mr Comyn said he has always had an interest in finance, which led him to study book-keeping during his playing days.

Since his retirement from football, Mr Comyn has spent a number of years in positions at accountancy firms after gaining his Association of Chartered Certified Accountants qualification.

Mr Comyn said: "The FE sector is currently facing some financial challenges, but despite this the college is continuing to invest to help enhance the student experience.

"I am very enthusiastic to play an active role in continuing to build on the college's strong foundations and maximising our future opportunities, with the addition of

the new construction centre and 3G football pitch being just two of the exciting projects currently being planned."

The Career Development Institute (CDI) has announced that Virginia Isaac, chief executive of the Inspiring Futures Foundation, has been voted as the new president elect of the professional body.

Mrs Isaac said: "I am totally convinced about the importance and value of careers work and never lose an opportunity to spread the word. I believe that careers support should be available to all regardless of age, ability, background or social standing."

Mrs Isaac will work with the CDI board until the founding president and company chair, Karen O'Donoghue, stands down at the CDI's annual conference in Cardiff in November. Mrs Isaac will then serve as president for two years.

And Mark Dawe, chief executive of OCR, will leave the company at the end of the month.

Mr Dawe, a former principal and chief executive at Hertfordshire's Oaklands College, will be succeeded by William Burton, who

joins from the Construction Industry Training Board in an interim role.

Simon Lebus, group chief executive at Cambridge Assessment, said: "I would like to thank Mark for this good work and wish him every success for the future."

Mr Dawe, a former chartered accountant, also worked as a deputy director for FE strategy at the Department for Education and Skills.



Lee Probert



Virginia Isaac



Andy Comyn



Mark Dawe

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk

**BECAUSE WE NEED THEM
UP AND RUNNING**

NOT JUST UP AND COMING

IT TAKES TECHBAC

The City & Guilds TechBac has been designed in partnership with employers, to equip young people with the professional and technical skills they need to confidently enter the world of work and stand out from the crowd.

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City & Guilds **TECHBAC®**



Blackburn College: Expanding Opportunity in Higher Education

Executive Dean: Higher Education £75K plus Benefits

The Opportunity. Blackburn College is determined and ambitious: committed to the principles that its Higher Education provision should balance the creation of academic, vocational and work opportunities for individuals as well as contributing significantly to socio-economic development in Blackburn and its region. At all stages, our HE provision is shaped by our dialogue with employers.

Through sustained investment in our University Centre, we are a very significant college provider of HE. We already have 3000 HE students. Our scale and success have been built on the creativity and agility of our excellent staff, always being proactive at times of policy and funding shift. It is this institutional energy which will drive the College forward to meet the new challenges and opportunities around the current emphasis on higher vocational skills and employability.

The Role. Our Executive Dean will translate an external policy and funding opportunity into a coherent response on the part of the College, underwritten by success criteria. Current recent leadership experience of curriculum and delivery in HE will be essential, alongside the proven capacity to implement successful revision to our range of qualifications, pedagogy, research and scholarship. Staff, at all levels, look to embrace change, recognising the unique opportunities being presented to the College. And employers have to feel that they are a crucial part of the process, from design to delivery.

The Person. We will appoint as Executive Dean an outstanding individual who combines experience and vision. The ability to lead the College's HE provision will depend on credibility within the College's academic community as well as having a profile within external, stakeholder environments.

If this brief interests and excites you, then please access the Candidate Pack at www.blackburn.ac.uk/jobs/

Potential candidates are encouraged to have a discussion with our retained consultant, Professor Bill Wardle at bill@billwardle.com or 07777642100

Completed applications should be sent to jobs@blackburn.ac.uk

Closing date of 12 noon on Monday 21 September 2015 and interviews are scheduled for Tuesday 6 October 2015.



Protocol

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Fantastic Opportunities Still Available!

We still have plenty of exciting career opportunities available for the new academic year!

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*Ts & Cs apply



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills



Department
for Education

Further Education Deputy Commissioners

Further Education Advisers

Sixth Form College (SFC) and Charitable and Commercial Provider (CCP) Advisers

Prevent Advisers

The Government is committed to raising standards in further education (FE). It has also recognised a need to reshape provision across the country to improve delivery and specialisation and ensure institutional resilience.

The FE Deputy Commissioners (FEDCs), FE Advisers and SFC & CCP Advisers will have two core roles:

- Supporting the intervention process to tackle poor performance, either in terms of financial management or quality.
- Supporting a series of area based reviews of provision. These were described in the policy statement Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions, with further detailed guidance issued September 2015.

The FEDCs and advisers will work alongside the FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners. FEDCs will lead area reviews and intervention cases. The advisers will undertake the institutional analysis which underpins the reviews and their recommendations.

We are also appointing 4 FE Prevent Advisers. They will conduct risk based assessments of non-publicly funded further education and training providers to ensure compliance with the Prevent Duty which is currently being legislated for to require all FE education providers to tackle radicalisation. In this respect prevent advisers will perform the same function that OFSTED undertakes for the publicly funded FE sector.

For all these roles we seek high calibre individuals with a good understanding of the education sector and strong experience in change and financial management. You will bring excellent analytical skills. Your personal impact and credibility will need to gain the confidence of stakeholders across the FE sector.

These national roles are being offered for a two year period on a commission by commission basis. The Deputy Commissioner role will be remunerated at up to £700 a day and the respective Adviser roles at up to £600 per day. All applicants will need to be DBS checked.

To find out more, please visit www.FEadviserappointments.com or call our advising consultants at GatenbySanderson, Paul Aristides on 020 7426 3987 or Elliott Rae on 020 7426 3964 for a confidential discussion.

Closing date is noon on 30 September 2015.



Principal and Chief Executive

Competitive package

Swindon College is a highly successful college playing a key educational leadership role in the region. With around 10,000 learners of which 2,400 are full-time, and a turnover of c£22m the college is strongly placed to continue moving forward with confidence. With its excellent location and growing local economy Swindon provides many opportunities for the strategic development of the college's education and training services.

Following the announced departure of our current Principal, Andrew Miller, we are looking to recruit our next Chief Executive to ensure we meet the challenges of the ever-changing FE landscape. The successful candidate will join a college that has made a remarkable transition from one found to be failing by Ofsted in 2007 to one graded as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2013. We are immensely proud of the achievements of our students, our dedicated staff team and our partners.

A highly experienced strategic leader who can provide clear vision and direction, the successful candidate will bring exceptional communication skills, imagination, commercial acumen, a creative and innovative approach and a positive, entrepreneurial attitude. The incoming Principal will build on our strong and diverse range of external stakeholders and position Swindon College as a key partner across our region. With experience of building partnerships and making strategic goals an economic and financial reality, you will bring substantial leadership skills and the ability to maximise the potential of the college.

With an understanding of teaching and learning, high quality outcomes, innovative and responsive curriculum, the financial and funding landscape and developments within HE and international provision, any incoming candidate will need broad and extensive senior leadership experience in the FE sector.

You must bring a passion for working with young people and inspiring a new generation and an exceptional track record of leadership and management. This role presents an outstanding opportunity for an individual with ambition, drive and vision to lead a highly successful and progressive college.

To find out more, please visit www.swindonleadership.com or call our advising consultants at **GatenbySanderson, Paul Aristides** on **020 7426 3987** or **Manjit Mundair-Lalli** on **07807 624 332** for a confidential discussion.

Closing Date: Monday 28 September

GatenbySanderson 



Big Creative Training (formerly Dv8 Training) is a well-established and expanding training provider with a long track record of delivering positive outcomes for learners. Our mission is to improve the lives of young people through high quality training and creative industry experiences. We have more than 300 young people going through our vocational study programmes per year and they all take qualifications in maths and English.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Lead

Full Time

£40,000 per annum

We are looking for an outstanding teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) lead to join our dedicated team based in Walthamstow, East London. The successful candidate will have maths and English at GCSE grade "C" or above, hold a degree, and be a qualified teacher

How to apply

For an informal conversation about the role please call **Ian Morton** on **07973 518 235**. If you wish to apply please send a CV and covering letter detailing how you meet the key tasks and desired qualities above, and explaining why you would be good for this position. We also require you to download our latest Ofsted report and write a two-page (maximum) action plan indicating how you would address the teaching, learning and assessment challenges that were raised by Ofsted. Please send all the above to **ian.morton@bigcreative.education** by **5pm on Friday 2nd October 2015**.

Gaming Lead Tutor

3 days per week, term time only

£12,508 per annum

We are looking for an outstanding gaming lead tutor to join our dedicated team based in Walthamstow, East London. The successful candidate will have maths and English at GCSE grade "C" or above and be a qualified teacher or working towards their professional qualification.

How to apply

For an informal conversation about the role please call **AJ Kwame** on **07984 414 142**. If you wish to apply please send a CV and covering letter detailing how you meet the key tasks and desired qualities above, and explaining why you would be good for this position. Please send all the above to **aj.kwame@bigcreative.education** by **5pm on Friday 2nd October 2015**.



ENGINEERING LECTURER/ COURSE MANAGER

PLYMOUTH SISNA PARK
COMPETITIVE RATES OF PAY
HOURS PER WEEK 37
WEEKS PER YEAR 52

Based at Sisna Park Plymouth, we are looking for a qualified and experienced Engineering Lecturer to join our established engineering team.

Applicants must have a minimum of level 4/degree in an appropriate discipline (specifically engineering maintenance including PLC, microprocessors & electronics and maths, science and CAD) and hold or be working towards a teaching qualification.

LECTURER/ASSESSOR - ENGINEERING

PLYMOUTH SISNA PARK
COMPETITIVE RATES OF PAY
HOURS PER WEEK 37
WEEKS PER YEAR 52

Based at Sisna Park Plymouth, we are looking for an experienced individual who will manage the recruitment, delivery, assessment and administration of engineering courses as directed by the CL. Demonstrating effective use of learner centred practise and acceptance of a culture of change and improvement.

- Applicants must have appropriate qualifications (engineering based), ideally to degree level.
- Willingness to gain certification in areas required by legislation or necessary for the post e.g. Assessor/IV.

LECTURER & COURSE MANAGER ENGINEERING X 2

CORNWALL COLLEGE - ST AUSTELL
COMPETITIVE RATES OF PAY
HOURS PER WEEK 37
WEEKS PER YEAR 52

Based at Cornwall College, we are looking for an experienced lecturers in Engineering to join our dynamic, experienced and committed team. The Lecturer will be responsible for student tuition and managing the student learning experience from interview and induction through to formal education delivery, taking a lead role in course organisation and all related matters.

The College framework is to encourage team working where Lecturers, Team Leads and Curriculum Leads work together in a supportive framework to provide the best learning experience for our students.

Applicants must have appropriate academic, professional or vocational qualifications at level 3 and relevant commercial, academic or vocational experience within the industry.

IF YOU REQUIRE FURTHER INFORMATION ON THESE ROLES, PLEASE CONTACT **ANDY PHILLIPS** ON 01726 226422

LECTURER 2 IN BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Post Ref: 5783, 18.5 hours per week, Permanent, £26,145- £34,092 per annum, pro rata (dependant on qualifications)

We are seeking to appoint a suitably qualified Management lecturer to teach across a range of business and management courses with a particular specialism in human resources management. We are looking for someone who is suitably qualified to develop and teach on CIPD Level 3 and Level 5 courses. Candidates should possess a relevant degree, be a member of CIPD and be a fully qualified lecturer with experience of teaching human resources management at a higher academic level.

You will be someone who can demonstrate exceptional teaching ability and you must have excellent communication and IT skills and be able to work as part of a team. You will be joining an extremely successful business and management delivery team who prides itself on exceptionally high standards and the ability to create high quality learning experiences for their students.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate, in their personal statement, practical examples of how they fulfil the person specification.

Due to the nature of this post you will be required to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure Check.
To find out more about this great opportunity visit www.sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/vacancies alternatively email vacancies@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk or call 0191 511 6000 to request an

We are working towards equal opportunities and welcome applications from all sections of the community.

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Various hours available, £20 - £25 per hour + statutory holiday pay

GCSE English Lecturer (Lancashire)

Various hours available, £17 - £19 per hour + statutory holiday pay



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*Until
30th September
2015

To apply for one of these roles or to be considered for any of the amazing opportunities we have across the UK please send your CV to:

jobs@protocol.co.uk or visit www.protocol.co.uk to register online.



Brinkburn
Blakelock Road
Hartlepool
TS25 5PF

Hartlepool Sixth Form College has experienced rapid growth and over the past 8 years has a 99.6% average pass rate for A levels. We are seeking to appoint specialist teachers to work with students at A level, AS, BTEC and GCSE.

We are looking for outstanding teachers with real enthusiasm for their subject who will contribute to the continued development of the College.

TEACHER IN HEALTH, CARE AND CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Outstanding classroom practitioner with vocational background preferably in the Health sector. Must have a passion for their subject and the ability to inspire young people to study and achieve. Willingness to teach across the full ability range and to be flexible within the department is essential. The department draws on the specialism and expertise of all of the Tutors. Teamwork is an essential element to ensure sharing of good practice, resources and ideas. The ethos is one of a commitment to high standards of work from both staff and students within a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Salary Range: Point 1 £21,684 - PSP 3 £37,008

Start date: 4th January 2016

The College is an equal opportunities employer committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all learners and expects all staff to share this commitment.

The successful candidate will need to undertake an Enhanced Disclosure via the DBS.

For further information please visit our website www.hpoolsfc.ac.uk to download an application pack or alternatively email: hsfc@hpoolsfc.ac.uk or telephone: 01429 294444

PREVIOUS APPLICANTS DO NOT NEED TO RE-APPLY.

Closing date: 25th September 2015



Teacher in Maths GCSE and Functional Skills

Full time/Part time

Maternity Cover until July 2016

- Up to £35,000 p.a. (pro rata for PT hours) depending on skills and experience
- **Sessional hours** (£27.08 per hour) may also be available
- Ideally to start beginning of October 2015

We require a teacher to deliver GCSE and Functional Skills mathematics to students working on vocational programmes from Entry level to Level 3. The successful applicant will understand the GCSE and Functional Skills courses and how to best enable our students to achieve well.

You will join our strong and experienced Maths team and with them, inspire, excite and engage students and help them to move on to higher education, further education, employment or training. You will be sensitive to your students' needs and enable and encourage them to express and reach their

true potential. You'll also know how to monitor each step of their progress however big or small and celebrate their successes.

Whether you are a graduate, a teacher new to the profession or someone with experience of teaching maths we would like to hear from you.

We are able to offer you a final salary pension scheme, generous holidays and the facilities of a College campus set in 70 acres of green belt in a peaceful setting. The College has excellent transport links and is set in a location convenient to London and the South East and offers a large free on-site car park.

Please indicate which contract type you are interested in.

Online applications must be submitted by **20th September 2015** and interviews will be held on **25th September 2015**.

To all Finance Professionals in FE...

TRIBAL

which of the following benchmark data would you like to see?



Provision of workplace delivery productivity



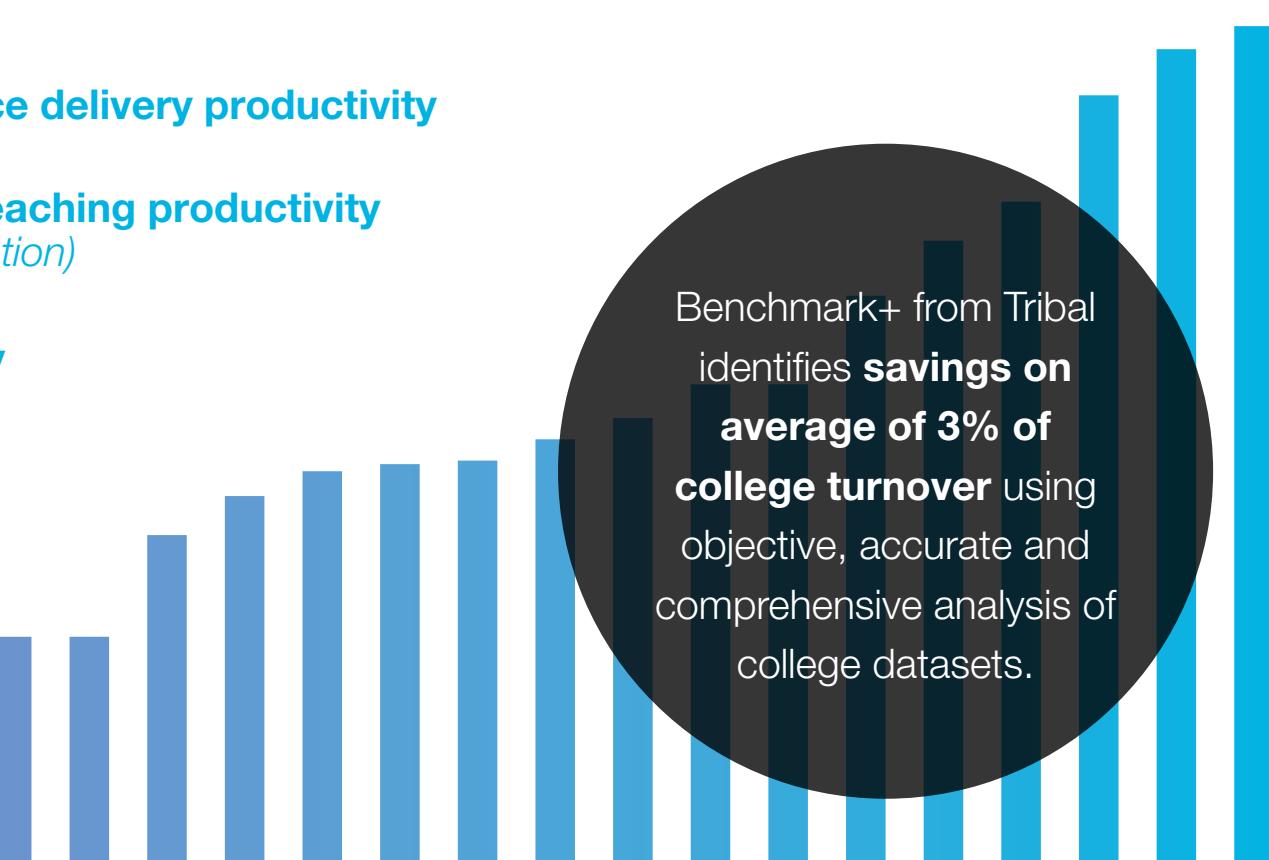
Provision of overall teaching productivity
(eg class size and utilisation)



Teaching delivery pay

To compare hundreds of benchmarks, get your free access to the Benchmark+ demo.

Simply email your response along with "compare" to benchmarking@tribalgroup.com or call Nick Pidgeon on 0115 934 7378



FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

7			1	3		5		9
		9		6	5			
2								
	5				1		4	
	3				6			
1	4					2		
							8	
		8	7		3			
9	8		2	4			5	

Difficulty: EASY

Last Week's solutions

6	9	1	4	5	7	2	8	3
3	7	4	8	9	2	6	5	1
2	5	8	6	1	3	7	4	9
4	8	3	1	2	9	5	7	6
5	6	2	7	3	4	9	1	8
7	1	9	5	6	8	4	3	2
1	4	6	9	8	5	3	2	7
9	3	7	2	4	1	8	6	5
8	2	5	3	7	6	1	9	4

Difficulty: EASY

7			1	3		5		9
		9		6	5			
2								
	5				1		4	
	3				6			
1	4					2		
							8	
		8	7		3			
9	8		2	4			5	

Difficulty: MEDIUM

2	3	9	8	1	4	6	7	5
8	6	7	3	2	5	1	4	9
4	5	1	9	6	7	3	8	2
6	8	3	4	9	2	7	5	1
1	4	5	7	3	6	9	2	8
7	9	2	1	5	8	4	6	3
3	2	8	6	7	1	5	9	4
9	7	4	5	8	3	2	1	6
5	1	6	2	4	9	8	3	7

Difficulty: MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Spot the difference to WIN an FE Week mug



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

Last week's spot the difference winner was Tanya Ovenden-Hope (pictured right), Cornwall College Group director of education.

